The Green New Deal: Not Green and Not New

By Landon Stevens
May 2019

The views contained in this piece are those of the author and STRATA and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any other agency, organization, employer or company.
AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT

A long-running joke about some environmentalists is that they are watermelons--green on the outside and red on the inside. That is, they propose socialist policies in an attempt to achieve their green agenda. Most American environmentalists have objected to the watermelon characterization but a new set of politicians have openly embraced it. A perfect example of this set is Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY 14th District), who seeks to translate her newfound social acceptance into radical national policies. Earlier this year Ocasio-Cortez proposed the biggest watermelon plan in U.S. history, the Green New Deal.

2020 Democratic Presidential hopefuls were quick to throw their support behind the plan. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) co-sponsored the resolution saying that it would help address an “existential threat to our country, our planet, and our future.” Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) took her support a step further even suggesting how we would pay for the plan.

“With the revenue from the #UltimateMillionaireTax, we could provide...down payments on a Green New Deal,” Warren said on Twitter.¹

From Cory Booker and Kirsten Gillibrand to Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar, there is no shortage of Democratic presidential candidates who feel the U.S. economy is in need of a total overhaul in the name of climate action. All of this conjures up images of the Soviet-era five-year plans that started under Stalin.

PROMISES

The Green New Deal has little to do with solving a climate crisis. Instead, it is a laundry list of socialist ideals wrapped in the false packaging of an urgent existential threat. In addition to tackling carbon dioxide emissions, the plan promises government healthcare, guaranteed jobs, the overhaul of the American travel industry, costly upgrades to every building in the country, affordable housing, and even the elimination of methane-emitting livestock.

The resolution language of the Green New Deal says that “it is the duty of the Federal Government...to create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure

prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States.” Ocasio-Cortez also initially envisioned the plan extending that economic security to those unable or even unwilling to work.

How exactly can the U.S. Congress, which has not held a public approval rating over 40 percent in the last 14 years, be expected to effectively ‘create’ millions of jobs?

Who determines what is a ‘good’ job? Or what constitutes a ‘high-wage’? How do you provide economic security for those unwilling to work? This level of micromanagement at an economy-wide scale is impossible.

Nobel laureate economist Friedrich A. Hayek discussed the inherent problem with attempts at massive centralized planning like those in the Green New Deal.

“The practical problem, however, arises precisely because these facts are never so given to a single mind,” said Hayek. “In consequence, it is necessary that in the solution of the problem, knowledge should be used that is dispersed among many people.”

Indeed, the clearest voices in opposition to the Green New Deal may come from other Democratic presidential hopefuls. Former Starbucks CEO and presidential candidate, Howard Schultz, has blasted the plan as “unrealistic,” claiming it would result in unsustainable government spending. “I think it’s immoral to suggest that we can tally up to $20, $30, $40, $50 trillion of debt to solve a problem that could be solved in a different way,” Schultz added. Former Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper also attacked the plan’s reliance on the government saying the “resolution sets the Green New Deal up for failure by shifting away from private decision-making.”

---


CONCLUSION

The truth is that the Green New Deal is not so much about being ‘green’ and its tactics are far from new. Instead, the plan aims at furthering a dangerous and costly socialist agenda at the expense of free-market principles. In addition to tackling carbon dioxide emissions, the plan promises government healthcare, guaranteed jobs, the overhaul of the American travel industry, costly upgrades to every building in the country, affordable housing, and even the elimination of pesky methane-emitting livestock.

As lawmakers consider solutions for problems, environmental or otherwise, grand unilateral overhauls like the Green New Deal will always seem tempting. Sooner or later, however, they all turn out to be watermelons. It is the free-market which will result in a larger yield of high-quality, efficient, green alternatives rather than a one-size-fits-all approach void of competition by a nationalized-economy.

As Richard Stroup and Jane Shaw presciently stated in 1992, “When environmental goals and controls are politically determined, they are subject to a process that is often driven by groundless accusations, supported by public fear, and legislated with special interests in mind. Populist sentiment and pork-barrel politics rather than actual environmental dangers, currently determine priorities.”

Unfortunately, that statement is even truer today than it was 25 years ago.

###

---